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ABSTRACT

A model for undergraduate programs designed to integrate foreign language instruction with training for an international public service occupation is outlined. The language component and professional training, taught separately at first, are brought together at the end of the program in an internship in an international public service organization. The model is recommended for a Spanish language program, an area in which the need for economic development and international aid is great. The internship component, while valuable to the student, can be difficult to administer. Ideally, participants should have advanced language skills, be required to have adequate grades in specific courses, and appropriate advising. At Southern Illinois University (Carbondale), the program currently under development will require students to have 4 years of a foreign language, take eight core courses, and select electives from any department with suitable offerings. It is suggested that such a program, housed in the language department, is likely to encounter resistance from other departments involved. (MSE)

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Foreign Language and International Public Service at SIU-C: an Interdisciplinary B.A. Degree Program under Development

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The purpose of this presentation is to suggest a model for application of Foreign Language skills to a professional area. Additionally, I would like to offer this model as a package from which you can mix and match so that it fits your own institution.

The basic idea is to combine almost a major in Foreign Language with a collection of courses which would be appropriate for international public service. The two areas of the total major, the language and professional part can be brought together at the end of the course of studies by an internship in some international public service organization. Or study abroad may be required instead. Or for a really rigorous and demanding program, both may be required. The end result should be graduates who have jobs in which their Foreign Language skills are important.

Let's begin with the bottom line--jobs. While the job market in most sectors of the economy continues to languish, that in both governmental and non-profit public service, both domestic and foreign, remains active. International public service jobs sponsored by the government are to be found within the federal government and through international organizations like the United Nations. Because internationally-oriented Federal agencies (i.e. Foreign Service of the Department of State) often have large domestic

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contingents, and domestic agencies (i.e. Department of Health and Human Services) have international activities such as the Public Health Service and Social Security Administration, it is not possible to determine the totals for jobs that are purely international simply by totaling the number of employees in the international organizations. To some extent the same thing is even true of the largest grouping of purely international agencies, the United Nations. This overlap situation should be kept in mind while perusing the list of potential governmental, (both U.S. and international), employers because domestic agencies are not listed; yet many have international components.

To a large extent the same crossover relationship is true of the large number of organizations in the non-profit sector. According to Lester M. Salamon, in American's Non-Profit Sector, that sector accounts for about six percent of the GNP, more than $300 billion each year, and 6.7% of the work force is employed by it. This of course refers only to U.S. Non-Profits, only a portion of which are international, and it excludes international non-profits, like the International Red Cross, which often employ U.S. citizens.

There are, in other words, jobs available for graduates who have language skills, appropriate training, and commitment to service for others. At the entry level most of the jobs do not pay as well, to be sure, as comparable positions in business. Within the realm of international public service, however, there are good chances for advancement, "benefits" usually surpass those in the business community, and opportunities for minorities and hitherto under-represented segments of the population are particularly good. The package I have put together for you includes a list of

potential employers along with a list of addresses. It also includes names and addresses of several publications in which Help Wanted ads in this area are placed, both for internships and for jobs.

The International Public Service (IPS) specialization within an existing Foreign Language major should be particularly attractive in Spanish. Almost a third of the current number of our Foreign Language and International Trade students are doing their work in Spanish. International business opportunities in that language are not as plentiful as would be expected, given the large number of speakers of Spanish in the world. The problem is that, with only a few exceptions, the countries where Spanish is the native language are not heavily industrialized with strong economies. Many of these same countries have high inflation, low standards of living , and high unemployment. They are not; therefore, except for Mexico, major trading partners with the U.S. Because of their unemployment situation, they are unwilling to hire non-nationals, and because of their economic situation we do not export heavily to them. As a result, the need for American business people skilled in Spanish is not proportionate to the number of Spanish speakers in the world.

By exactly the same token, however, these countries are the very ones to which aid is being sent in one form or another. The delivery of this aid, whether it be in goods or services, is a task for which trained Spanish-speaking personnel are needed. It is to provide suitable training for such people that Spanish (IPS) would be ideal.

The opposite side of the coin would be the disadvantages of such a program. To be sure, there are some. The main one is that it is more trouble for faculty advisors. The worst-case scenario here is the requirement of an overseas internship. Less time-consuming would be a domestic internship. Even less effort would be required for a study abroad requirement, unless it meant correlating studies at a foreign university with specific courses at the home institution so that unit credit for specific courses could be determined. The least trouble for a faculty advisor would be if there were no internship or study abroad requirements at all. That would obviate the need for special admission requirements, and it would reduce the advisor's burdens dramatically. The "down" side of that approach, however, is that the student's language proficiency, cultural acclimation skills, and post-graduation job prospects would all be diminished.

If it is decided that there will be an internship, either foreign or domestic, the keys to control are in admission requirements and advisement. The reasons for the former are apparent: many potential internship sponsors apply the same standards for giving a student an internship--a 3.0 GPA--as they do for hiring them as a new employee. If a student does badly on an internship, the sponsor will think at least twice before taking on another from the same program. A prime expectation for interns abroad is that they have language skills at an advanced level (or for some languages, intermediate-high). All the above presupposes above-average students. To some extent students who enter a program such as this will be self-selecting, which in straightforward terms means that the weaker students will avoid all the work

that such a degree program entails. But this is not always the case, and trying to arrange an internship for a student who is just barely above the probation level is difficult, frustrating, and time-consuming.

Means for restricting admission are, understandably, limited. The one which seems to work best at SIU is built on the qualifying course or courses requirement. According to this system, the student must complete one or more key courses with a specified minimum grade before being accepted into the major. This places the focus upon specific areas of academic ability rather than on an overall GPA. Such a system, however, has its drawbacks, not the least of which is the bookkeeping it entails.

The other key to quality control is good, old-fashioned advising. With the advent of computerized registration, advisement is coming to be thought of as unnecessary. But there is much in the official printed materials, like catalogues, which students are expected to read, but which somehow escapes their attention. I've included an advisement check list in the attachments so that you can see what matters an advisor and student might want to discuss when the student enters the program and at critical junctures afterwards.

One of the most important considerations, of course, is the subject matter of such a program of studies. As mentioned earlier, there are two parts to the campus course work for the major--the foreign language and the professional component. At SIU we will require four years of a foreign language. This is essentially the language skills sequence plus the culture

course. It does not include linguistics, history of the language, or literature. These, however, may be added by the student if his or her language proficiency was high enough at entry to free up some units.

The professional component depends upon the scope of offerings at your institution. As we are developing this variation of the language major at SIU, it is becoming clear to us that the professional component should be divided into two parts--a core of required courses and a collection of compatible courses from which the student makes a selection in accordance with career goals. As the program is presently envisioned, the core courses are as follows:

GEB 114	Intro. to American Govt. and Politics
ECON 214	Intro. to Macroeconomics
ECON 215	Intro. to Microeconomics
ANTH 340	Coping in Other Countries
POLS 270	Intro. to International Relations
POLS 340	Intro. to Public Administration
POLS 371	International Political Economy
SPCM 341	Intro. to Intercultural Communication

The list of courses from which selections can be made is much larger. It is divided into groups of courses appropriate for each language. The courses are drawn from any department that has suitable offerings. The departments we have drawn from are: Accounting, Agribusiness Economics, Anthropology, Computer Science, Economics, English, Finance, Food and Nutrition, Geography, Health Education, History, Management, Philosophy,

Political Science, and Social Work. The list of these courses as well as the core courses are included in the handout for this presentation. While this same list will certainly not apply to your institution, it may serve to facilitate the formulation of your own list.

Finally, we might consider briefly some strategic or political considerations. The powers-that-be will no doubt ask if you are not simply luring regular foreign language majors into this variant form of the major. One way to respond to this question is by using a student questionnaire. In all probability you'll need to use such a questionnaire early on anyway in order to prove to the authorities that there is strong interest in such a program. So you can add the question "Are you presently majoring in a foreign language?" This will help to assess the likelihood of building enrollments in a Foreign Language and International Public Service at the expense of conventional majors. The logical observation, that a new program will likely attract majors from outside the department and perhaps even bring students to the institution, should not be overlooked. The survey questionnaire which we used is also included in the handout materials.

Perhaps a word ought to be said in closing about the perceptions of a foreign language department which mounts such a program. Let me quote from a letter written by one of my colleagues in Political Science when he heard about this initiative.

> "I think it is time to put a stop to this aggrandizement.... The present proposal is bare-faced imperialism in search of a rationale.... Were such a major to be invented, its logical home would be in the discipline that traditionally has prepared students

for public sector employment and already offers courses in international relations, comparative area studies, and public affairs. I am not describing the Foreign Language Department. So my answer is NO, a thousand times no!"

Well, what can I say? There is certainly going to be a pothole or two on the road to survival. I wish you the best of luck in getting around them.